

THE MEASURE

A JOURNAL OF POETRY



Poems by Edward Sapir, Marie Luhrs, Lindley
Williams Hubbell, and others — — — — —

Marianne Moore, Reviewed — — — — —

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Legend

FIRST thunders spoke at half-past one
On the sixth day; the new sun
Burned white behind great silver clouds;
And clattering softly in the crowds
Of trees and droning on the meadow
The first frail rain spread like a shadow
Till suddenly it was released
Upward within a wide white mist
Leaving sharp colours and new smells.
Pink snails looked out from their blue shells;
Two wide geese, brilliant from their bath,
Came rocking down a Thumb-scooped path,
Their stiff steps shattering the bright
Green puddles there. The air flowed white.
The apple tree (just blossoming)
Became a strange, star-glittering thing. . . .

When the rain's singing scarce was over
They stared irresolute from cover.
The man leapt forth and gave a cry
And wallowed in the weeds to dry.
But Eve stood tiptoe under a slim
Wind-ruffled arc with a red rim
And screamed in terror, seeing such
A beautiful thing she could not touch.

George H. Dillon

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“Christ Bearing the Cross”

By Giordano

HIS eyes look down. . .heavy. . .unwashed by tears;
His young body bows underneath the wood
Crossed for the hanging of the kind and good;
He carries the cross and looks down the years.
Before the hanging death in blood and pain
He sees the world—all time in this one time,
All space between what lush, what barren clime
Gathered in this one space lucent and plain.

The poor with many ribs, the knives held high
To kill, each wanton lifting of the skirt,
The souls and bodies fashioned for the sky
Boring with piggish snouts into the dirt:—
He looks on these for whom He is to die;
He has no tears for them, He is so hurt.

Marie Luhrs

Remember This

REMEMBER this, O pitiful heart:
As surely as lover and lover part,
So do a man and his sorrow take
Divergent paths, for healing's sake.

Remember this, O haunted mind:
The years are slow, but certainly kind;
And every grief and every crime
Will seem less terrible, in time.

Lindley Williams Hubbell

Hounds

IF (in the madness of a metaphor)
I should unleash the hounds that keen and start,
Sullenly prowling, kenneled in my heart,
And set them harrowing with you before,
A long bright tumult like a meteor
Would lunge into our silences and part
The blinds where you, a veering fox, would dart,
Streaming your terror.....to be quick no more.

And soon the master of the hounds would ride,
Following on the crooked crimson track,
To bend above the truest-pointed head
And lift the sodden flame and beat aside
The ruthless, lean, unsatiated pack,—
No better off because a fox was dead.

George O'Neil

Be Not Afraid of Beauty

BE not afraid of Beauty when
Beauty, the lovely-eyed,
Fawnlike looks into your eye
On solitary pride.

Be then not halted to a stone
Of silence and high fear,
Nor send gulls desolate upon
The dusky sea to peer.

Seek out the voice within her eyes,
Which is music of bells,
And what the far wind, gathering,
Through the hair blowing tells.

She will not otherwise into
The wondering ear give word,
She who has words her own, lovely,
But will have them deferred.

Than if, having all done with fear,
You take her by the hand
And lead her, being led by her,
To her own woodland.

Here there is broken sun that falls
Through birch-tree lanes,
And the soft melody of winds
In silvery moon-rains,

And starry waiting for the dawn,
And twilight floating on
The water smouldering before
The yellow burst of sun.

The candle burning in the sky
Flares down into the wood
Gold for the orioles and copper
For the dim owls that brood.

Take her softly by the hand
And walk illuminate
Through mossy maze amid the chatter
And flutter of birds elate.

Be not afraid of Beauty when
Beauty, the lovely-eyed,
Has lost you in her witch's wood
And vanished from your side.

She has no fouler witch's art
Than all the night and day
To whisper in your aching heart,
To sing within your aching heart
And waste your heart away.

Quiescence

Where under the vibrant leaves
Of the shadowy tree
He holds his palms and grieves
On tearless memory

There is great splendor thrown
Toward the fall of day
Upon his head, but bone
And heart are as cold clay.

What he would give to Heaven
In a storm of tears
Is in a cavern driven
With faltering jeers,

And the wringing of suppliant hands
Is caught in a calm;
His spirit rises and stands
Palm in palm

And walks an appointed way
To meet with memory,
Leaving the body astray
By the shadowy tree.

Lovers' Night

NIGHT has a beautiful way with lovers. She
No more than whispers of abandonment;
Slowly she lets the hair fall, with the scent
Of the winds sweetens her body perfectly,
And round the neck wears starlight for a charm.
She is a playful wanton, indolent,
Who in girl-hearted mothering is bent
Over the lovers lying arm in arm.

Lovers are beautiful children of the night.
They hear faint whispers in their mother's hair;
Disturbed, they cannot sleep, they cannot wake,
They are entranced in fragrance and dim light;
They cannot seize their joy, which they mistake
For a strange, subtle, somnolent despair.

Where the Little Children Ride

THESE faint winds bring the hobby-horse
Music of the park,
It is the prayerful hour between
The day and the dark.

This fragmentary music rims
The vast hush of God
Illuminated by the ghostly
Flare of goldenrod

And melting of the clouds in
The sun's crucible—
The far strains are faint and lovely,
High Heaven is still,

And where the little children ride
They have ecstatic eyes
And fly the hair and clasp the horse
Sailing in the skies.

Edward Sapir

When I had Left You

WHEN I had left you sunken half in sleep's
Cool waters, half floating on the fanned
Wind-ripples of my gentle, passing hand,
I drew back as a mother does who keeps
Watch of a babe, not knowing why he weeps
At wakening in a darkened shadow-land,
Yet striving tenderly to understand
His little grief, while back in dreams he sweeps.

And as a mother kneels, so knelt I there
Beside you at the cot's edge, thinking soon
How beautiful you were, how very white,
How needful of me; offering up a prayer
That we might never see this pallid moon
Of piteous love go down into the night.

Marriage

I could not answer you
Until you let me go,
And I went slowly back into my room,
Then there was nothing that I did not know
Of love or of not sleeping,
For in the darkness I could hear slow
Sobbing like the dry wind sweeping
Up the river-bed,—
And I came back to you
And quieted your weeping—
And we were wed.

Eda Lou Walton

Were You Ever Alone

WALKING along
has there flown
through your head
the buzzing drone
of being dead?
Has wind in your ears
blown
freezing fears?
Has it slid
separate air
between each bone
in your head—
floating each tissue apart?
Have you moaned a soundless groan?
Were you ever alone?
Thousands brushing by,
yet none
for the incredibly lost one?
At her heart
have you thrown
the last dart?
Have you known
the cold dread of stone?
Were you ever alone?

Notes for an Epilogue

(In a Restaurant)

EVERYTHING is static, still
as in an antique miracle.

Air is held aloof—
taut in the vise
of an etheric woof.

People gnaw securely,
like mice,
or scurry
about in a terrific hurry.

Only the glare of
Silence glistens
everywhere and

Love is a cuckoo bird
dead in a Swiss clock:

(tick)

(tack)

(tick)

(tock).

W. L.

Forethought

YOU are a weak and foolish lover
To think I should so soon uncover
Heart and pale hands to anyone.

What of the candles at the altar
With flames that quicken, and flare and falter?
What of the shadows on green snow?
As these things pass, so love must go.

Elizabeth Sanderson

A Death

HERE were pride, and a clean swiftness,
Quietness after sweet clear sound—
Beauty that knew the chill of hailstones
Beating on wintry ground;
Do not bury her in spring flowers—
Snow should cover this mound.

Loretta Roche

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Associate Editors—Hervey Allen, Maxwell Anderson, and Frank Ernest Hill.

Executive Secretary—Lindley Williams Hubbell.

ACTING EDITOR: LÉONIE ADAMS

Precieuse, Model 1924

(*Observations. By Marianne Moore. The Dial Press, 1924.*)

WOMEN who sit in houses, watching, develop that air of pride and bleak finality. The adventure remains most unto itself: environment determines the patterns of the idiom. In poetry the tendency would be towards the cryptic; but enigmas, we are told, are not poetry. I am all for saying: "Miss Moore's book reveals an interesting and unusual mind, whose brusque angularity, perverse affectations, and awkward sense of sound—after all, can this be poetry?" Dogmatism forthwith says No, but Honesty sends me to the notes: "Where the boundary between prose and poetry lies, I shall never be able to understand. The question is raised in manuals of style, yet the answer to it lies beyond me. Poetry is verse: prose is not verse. Or else poetry is everything with the exception of business documents and school books." Conformity to expedience, complaisance with our modern day's complexity—these beget a rhythm more difficult to recognize than to deny. But Poetry, also, is no Apollo Belvedere, no formal thing, O Tommy Higginson!

Such precipitate of criticism as I nearly achieved above challenges to a further scrutiny of the original elements involved. Marianne Moore invites comparison with Emily Dickinson, whether

or no. Notice, for instance, the poems, "To a Rat," and "To an Intra-Mural Rat," and see what resemblance is there. Identify, positively and without further verification, the writer of

"Experiment to me
Is every one I meet
If it contain a kernel?
The figure of a nut
Presents upon a tree,
Equally plausibly;
But meat within is requisite,"

"If yellow betokens infidelity,
I am an infidel.
I could not bear a yellow rose ill will
Because books said that yellow boded ill,
White promised well."

"Not brittle, but
Intense,—the spectrum, that
Spectacular and nimble animal, the fish—"

"the slight snake rippling quickly through the grass."

"a narrow fellow in the grass occasionally rides."

"since disproportionate satisfaction anywhere lacks a proportionate air."

Compare, also, the poem "The soul selects her own society" with the poem "Silence." These girls may have in them an identity of stuff, for all their difference of dress, a difference accounted for easily enough by the variation of time and place. Superficially, that is all the difference in the world; I am just back in New York City from Amherst, and I know. But in neither case is dress worn kept from degradation by the dim capacity for wings.

If this capacity is less dim in the older sister, it is so precisely by the degree that a passion for life outranks a passion for observation. The second circle is included in the first; and Miss Moore never goes outside it. She does not fool herself: her title states her knowledge of her value. She sees much and knows much,—for instance, that diligence is to magic as progress is to flight; that there are things important beyond all this fiddle. To quote is to see

"that paddock full of leopards and giraffes—
long lemonyellow bodies
sown with trapezoids of blue."

or the hippopotamus

"nose and mouth combined
in one magnificent hopper."

She prizes the apt turn of speech, and uncovers many a shining phrase in the rubble of private conversation, or the pages of Baxter's *Saints' Rest*, or in a caption underneath a picture in the *Literary Digest*. She is Euphues without the flourishes; in her longest poems there is an air of clipped restraint. In this age of hard trying she is never a taurofocalist. She gives way to no ecstasy; she knows better. She is hard, and the world is not fluent. Her observation misses the rain of atoms. Life is a dried bone of arrangement.

Such art is eminently just to our era, and as good as we deserve. We live, these last few years, in a time of rebellion grown wise, of revolution come into the house. Why should our poets wear the smell of the ground? It is more cleanly to be observant, and more metropolitan.

Rolfe Humphries

Louise Townsend Nicholl: An Appreciation

LOUISE TOWNSEND NICHOLL has been more than an occasional editor and more than an all-but-constant associate editor of *The Measure*. She has been But here I have to introduce another name—that of Carolyn Hall.

For a long time I was not able to separate in my mind, as far as *The Measure* was concerned, the names of Louise Nicholl and Carolyn Hall, no more than I was able to separate the names of Beaumont and Fletcher. They were the only begetters of *The Measure* it seemed to me, and they were often its only sustainers. Which did the most of the sustaining? It was hard to tell. Sometimes Louise faltered, and then one would be inclined to give up all for lost if it were not for the steadiness of Carolyn's eyes. And sometimes Carolyn faltered, and then one rested on Louise's smile—the smile of one who was still able to salute the vision. But Carolyn dropped off after nearly three years of it. And Louise kept *The Measure* living even without Carolyn. I had thought that the two together supplied the element by virtue of which the organism lived.

But as Louise has carried on for over a year it would seem that she was the greater sustainer.

Anyway, *The Measure* was started and it was kept going with a wonderful asset in its favor—an attractive personage who, if not always in the editorial chair, was practically always in the editorial room. And that personage is Louise Townsend Nicholl. By attractive I mean literally one who attracts: Louise Townsend Nicholl has the quality of mind that attracts men and women who are adventuring, experimenting, feeling the forces, creating; hers is a mind that is rarely un-self-centered, that has a friendly interestedness in people and topics, that has a lighthearted adventurousness. *The Measure* never advertised itself as an organ of the younger generation. But I venture to think that it will come to be looked upon as one of the attempts of the younger generation in America that has been wholly fruitful, wholly successful. And the stamp that has been given to it—for I am aware of a distinctive stamp as I go through the files of *The Measure*—I ascribe definitely to its frequent editor and its all-but-constant associate editor: a stamp that is adventurousness, gaiety, delight in life and in all sorts of happenings, a high standard in poetry and a real seriousness in the discussion of it. Louise Nicholl so far has been the best part of *The Measure*. And we have to thank her not only for being a sustaining spirit, but for being the good comrade and the delightful hostess.

Padraic Colum

NOTES

BECAUSE of the pressure of other activities, Louise Townsend Nicholl has resigned her *Measure* editorship. In reorganizing the Board, *The Measure* has been fortunate in the addition of E. Merrill Root as editor and Lindley Williams Hubbell as executive secretary. The office of the latter, and the new business address of *Measure* will be at 223 West 15th Street, New York City. E. Merrill Root has been elected Acting Editor for August, September and October. Manuscripts may be mailed him at East Thompson, Connecticut.

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